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ABSTRACT

In response to a community reputation that has grown increasingly negative, the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) devised a strategic plan in 1998 to improve its programs and services and assure the educational success of its students. The planning process involved several steps: (1) revisiting the district mission statement; (2) defining the external entities that affect the district; and (3) requiring each participant in the project to state what personal values led them to work in the district, what they believe is the district's most serious weakness, and where they would like to see the district in three years. The document discusses each of these steps in detail, as they pertain specifically to LACCD. It also describes SWOT analysis, a brainstorming process that helped identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the district. This activity helped pinpoint six areas in need of improvement: (1) internal; (2) facilities; (3) revenue enhancement; (4) legislative; (5) marketing; and (6) operation. For each of these subgroups, the action plan specified at least two urgent proposals requiring immediate action, a concise statement of the issue, and a process for timely implementation. Includes a list of participants and their comments during the brainstorming activity and after the planning process. (EMH)

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LOS ANGELES
COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

EXTERNAL STRATEGIC PLANNING CONFERENCE

September 11, 1998

*"Make no little plans:
they have no magic to stir our blood"*

Burnham

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LACCD EXTERNAL STRATEGIC PLAN

September 11, 1998

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LACCD EXTERNAL STRATEGIC PLANNING CONFERENCE
SEPTEMBER 11, 1998

INTRODUCTION: IMAGE AND RESPONSE:

A positive reputation is a prime ingredient for organizational success. No matter how well an organization runs or how valuable its service, a negative image for whatever reason will seriously affect its ability to succeed. Unfortunately, justly or unjustly, a significant segment of the public views LACCD as an institution in crisis. Influential news sources like the *Los Angeles Times* have admonished trustees, administration and staff for a series of grave problems that portray the system as dysfunctional.

To be sure, the district does many things well. Its offerings are comprehensive, providing over 300 areas of concentration leading to certificates, degrees and transfer for 100,000 students, an extraordinary number of whom are underprivileged and receive special assistance. Accreditation reports for most colleges have been laudatory; and programs thrive like Valley College's Transfer Alliance Program (TAP), which is regarded as one of the best in the state with 90 percent of its transferees to UCLA outperforming peers who entered UCLA as freshmen. And there are numerous examples of productive alliances with high schools and businesses, stories of student success, of excellent teaching, of grateful alumni donating thousands of dollars.

But the good news of LACCD is obscured by the bad. Whether or not merited or even factually accurate, the allegations leveled at LACCD in the press over the last 10 months are astonishingly broad and potentially deadly: A bad real estate venture that will ultimately produce a \$20 million loss; the bitter resignation of the Chancellor only 16 months into a 4-year contract; a projected 13 million shortfall; a \$2.8 million fine and placement on a financial "watch" list by the state chancellor's office; dirty campuses with decaying structures that drop ceiling tiles and lack air conditioning and proper heating; a student population that has shrunk from 140,000 to 100,000; a police force that sets its own schedules; salary settlements characterized as imprudent; accusations of undue union influence in trustee elections; a dysfunctional central bureaucracy; a district-wide shared governance system bogged in process; student flight to competing colleges; threats to accreditation; trustees, administration and staff dueling in the high noon of the press.

LACCD leadership has taken bold steps to address many of these problems head on. Through a series of board actions, it stanching the hemorrhage of dollars, built up a reserve of \$8 million and undertook a massive decentralization project that delegates more autonomy to individual campuses. In addition, the trustees, faculty and staff of LACCD have pledged to work collaboratively to redesign the way the district does business. As one of several important decisions, they chose to create a strategic plan, a 3-5 year vision that charts the way to the ideal institution they wish to become. Central to that vision is *outstanding programs and services that assure the educational success of its students.*

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

On September 11, 1998, trustees, faculty and staff met in the district boardroom to begin constructing a strategic plan. (See list of participants, p 18.) Participants were keenly aware of the magnitude of the district's problems and the external and internal forces that threaten student success. As a group they were, and continue to be, highly motivated and united in their will make certain that LACCD's students achieve educational success.

Team leader Patrick McCallum, the new district legislative advocate, outlined the process of crafting a strategic plan. A strategic planning meeting, he said, differs from a regular meeting in many striking ways: while a regular meeting deals with details, a strategic session examines the big picture; one deals with trees, the other with forests; one with taking positions, the other with sharing governance; one with tactics, the other with strategies. Strategic planning follows several vital steps: 1) revisit the district mission statement; 2) define the external entities that affect the district; and 3) require each participant to state briefly a) what personal values led them to work in the district, b) what they believe is the district's most serious weakness, and c) where they would like to see the district in three years. This introductory exploration of values and interests sets the tone and suggests the general scope of the work ahead.

DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

The first step in strategic planning is to revisit the district mission statement. It functions as a philosophical base for evaluating the present and as a compass for charting the future. The LACCD's core mission focuses on serving well the educational needs of its students:

The mission of the Los Angeles Community Colleges is to provide comprehensive lower-division general education, occupational education, transfer education, transitional education, counseling and guidance, community services, and continuing education programs which are appropriate to the communities served and which meet the changing needs of students for academic and occupational preparation, citizenship, and cultural understanding.

In pursuit of this mission, we endeavor to:

- promote equal opportunity for participation;
- maintain appropriate standards for academic achievement;
- provide an educational environment which meets the needs of students with varied learning skills;
- provide support services which contribute to instructional effectiveness and student success;
- affirm the importance of multi-cultural, international, and inter-cultural collegiate experiences that foster individual and group understanding;
- manage effectively educational and financial resources.

THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

The following chart provides a sampling of the many social, political and economic forces that affect the well being of the district. Planners must identify those entities most crucial to the success of the district mission and form effective strategies for dealing with them.

<u><i>Policy Bodies</i></u> Legislature and staff Governor and staff CC BOG and staff LA County and city Council PICs and staff LA Unified High schools Personnel Commission Statewide Academic Senate	<u><i>Consultation Groups</i></u> Local Academic Senates Unions FACCC CEO Trustees ACCA Student organizations CIOs CBOs Business organizations	<u><i>Image</i></u> Media-press,TV, talk shows Public Relations Facilities appearance Quality of service Personal experience Word of mouth Marketing Success/failure stories
<u><i>Organizations</i></u> Community groups Taxpayer groups Unions Local employers Churches	<u><i>Competition</i></u> Neighboring CCs Private Colleges PICs LA Unified Adult Ed Virtual & long distance Ed	<u><i>Economy</i></u> Federal State Local Business & Industry
<u><i>Politics</i></u> 30 Local state legislators County & City elected officials Advocacy groups	<u><i>Allies for Advocacy</i></u> Other urban CCs Other CCs with same problems LA K-12	<u><i>Educational Needs</i></u> Business & Industry Local Community Students

INDIVIDUAL VIEWS OF VISION, VALUES AND PROBLEMS.

After reviewing the district mission statement and the external environment, the individual members of the group explained why they chose to work for LACCD, what significant problems they experience and what they hope the district would be like in three to five years. Below is a brief summary of their views followed by a sampling of individual comments.

- Three-year vision

In three years, the majority of participants hope for a greater focus on student needs and student outcomes, such as increased transfer and persistence rates. In addition, they would like to see more quality programs, greater flexibility in calendar and scheduling, cleaner facilities and increased funding with special provisions for aging campuses. The future would also include a decentralized form of leadership which would delegate to the individual colleges the authority (with appropriate financial incentives) to innovate, collaborate with local business and industry and attract and better serve more students.

- **Personal assessment**

Regardless of their role in the district, the majority of participants expressed deep commitment to students, teaching and learning; to education as the key to self development and social success; and to the district whose nine campuses provide easy and sometimes the only access for minorities, immigrants and reentering women.

- **Major current district weaknesses**

Perception of internal problems ranged widely, but frequently cited were deficiencies in leadership, cooperation, quality programs, and responsiveness to student needs. A centralized, bureaucratic governance system thwarts local planning and lacks appropriate research and incentives to serve students. Externally, problems range from inadequate funding to the exodus of students to suburban colleges because of LACCD's unkempt campuses and deteriorating structures.

Sampling of Individual Comments

<u><i>Why am I here in LACCD?</i></u>	<u><i>What is our biggest Problem?</i></u>	<u><i>What should LACCD be like in 3 years?</i></u>
Being a trustee provides an arena for change; I can give back what helped me.	Difficulty changing to reflect student and community needs.	Ability to adapt quickly to changing needs of students.
To give students confidence in their own ability to reach high goals.	Too territorial; we forget why we're here.	Our focus on students instead of internal entitlements; public confidence in our colleges.
To advance immigrant populations and help women to reenter the workforce. We open the door to their future	Not working to common goals; but today in this planning session we are together. Now we must learn to work as a family.	Strengthened college foundation and alumni association; expanded non-credit programs; more federal & state grants.
To give social mobility to students and help develop the Pacific Rim: service is the rent we pay.	A need to shift to being student centered without compromising employees.	A thriving, multi-college center for retooling the workforce.
To serve working people; education is the only way to achieve social and political equity, true independence.	Lack of vision, planning and leadership; we must solve problems or they won't be solved.	Productive relationships with business and industry; soaring enrollment because of cleaner campuses, flexible calendars, and ability to deliver student needs.
I love working with students, filling them with knowledge and hope.	Central problem is money; needs to generate more \$ locally; fight for our share.	A strong and effective presence in Sacramento.

I'm here because I love teaching and have a passion for educating students.	Money is a problem; but we need to try harder; tie in with music industry and music unions.	A clear vision and the will make it happen. Viable systems in place where minorities can transition to jobs in entertainment as well as business. Productive, amicable staff relationships.
To make a difference for students who are on the cusp of making decisions about life.	Funding bad. Productivity model weak because we chase ADA instead of quality education.	Increased quality of classes and programs with emphasis on service.
Gives me an opportunity to convey to students the value of creativity and self development.	Disparate elements instead of unified. Disorganization.	Everyone working together as a whole. Funding at the national average with additional funding for old colleges.
Teachers were role models that guided me. I Believe in and enjoy what I do and tell students, "If I can do it, so can you."	Excessive centralization that thwarts local planning. We need fewer constraints, more freedom to make meaningful plans.	Strengthened ability to improve the quality of life of residents which means adequate financing, high quality programs, clean, attractive facilities and productive contacts with labor and the corporate world.
Where would we be without education?	Need more local autonomy.	Hire more talented, committed people.
I value education as the key to unlocking personal talent.	We think we're the biggest and don't need to consult with others, that all we need is more \$ to fix broken elements.	The ability to change in timely, programmatic ways, including redefining ourselves with the stress on innovation.
Teaching is a renewable inspiration, a joy to witness student growth and social mobility.	Lack of qualified staff; bad selection process for new hires, overemphasis on process rather than quality decisions.	Increased transfer, persistence and completion rates. A willingness to embrace change and make it work for us. Better alliances with k-12 and a plan that leverages our strengths.
I've had great opportunities, thanks to my education, and now I want to repay the debt.	We've forgotten we are educators; we need stronger leadership.	A proactive institution with the will and ability to be number one.
Serve as a role model; if I can do it, so can the students; it's a matter of inspiring them.	Inadequate basic skills programs; a feeling we don't own the institution, we're just a part of it. We're big, yes, but need also to be best.	Adequate funding that recognizes the special needs of our colleges and clientele.

It's thrilling to share knowledge with students and watch them grow.	We're the stepchild of higher education, in the back of the line. Funding level too low.	Facilities that enhance learning and changes that one can see, feel and touch.
To make a difference in the lives of students.	Centralized decision making that ignores campus realities.	Nine autonomous charter colleges free of centralized decision making.
CC's provide open access, a second start for students and I want to be there to show the way.	Students need more attention; trash hurts student self-image. Decision making too restricted & secretive; we need to listen to everybody.	Trust in our leadership and decision makers; students properly mentored and prepared for tomorrow.
Education is critical to success; it's one of the most important jobs in society. There's nothing I'd rather do.	Too much focus on time process, not enough on results. We don't look at how well students succeed; we just count them when they enter.	A computer system and scheduling structure that allows a student to check out a career, see requirements, pull up schedules, and make a personal plan, complete with time lines.
Nothing gives me more satisfaction than being in the classroom with students who want to learn.	Dirty facilities drive too many students away. They feel they are still in high school instead of college.	Be proud of a district that's doing an outstanding job of serving students.
LA city college changed, no it saved my life; now I want to give something back to the society that was so good to me.	We don't operate like a business. We provide a service, our students are our customers, and we must always upgrade service and keep customers happy so they spread the word.	Externally, an institution valued for providing quality service to customers; internally a place to work that instills pride.
I'm here because I need a job and want to apply my passion for efficiency and effectiveness to all our support services.	Inefficient-dirty classrooms, no heat, no air conditioning. Effective management of education should be.	A will and the courage to create the prestige we once enjoyed.
Education is one of society's most important functions. I may not earn a lot, but I feel like a million.	Misalignment between vision and mission and how we waste time and energy.	Increased emphasis on student outcomes; resources focused on student success & persistence.
We provide people with a second chance to grow.	We seem to lack the ability to do better.	All campuses equipped to serve students well.

I want to serve students, it's what I do well.	Constant, debilitating war.	Be best in serving students needs.
Education leads to jobs & social and mental betterment. What a joy to be part of the process.	Fighting ourselves internally and externally in the media.	Work together in teams like Walmart employees do. A system for recruiting students and graduating them quickly.
I'm here to pay back what education has given me.	Constant struggle between central office and local campuses.	Offer special services to recent arrivals and low-income students that promote success.

SWOT ANALYSIS: A GROUP OVERVIEW OF DISTRICT VITALITY

SWOT is a rapid, brainstorming process that identifies (S) strengths, (W) weaknesses, (O) opportunities, and (T) threats in a given area. The technique is useful mainly for developing a broad, multi-dimensional impression of the vitality of the institution and as a preparation for pragmatic planning. Preparatory to putting together an *action* plan, members selected three college functions they wished to subject to a SWOT analysis—Internal, Facilities and Legislation. Below is a sampling of responses:

INTERNAL

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Broad range of talent and resources. Programs serve a variety of needs. Access to media. Open door provides a safety net for society. Commitment to student-centered mission. Openness to change. Trustee support for change. Rich diversity, resources, location.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>No clear definition of "district." Rank and file feel left out. Territorialism, resistance to change. Mission not operationalized. Inadequate focus on win-win solutions. Overemphasis on process instead of outcomes. Lack of accountability.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Educate more students in our service area. Educate legislators & public to what we do. Explore untapped "markets," & services. Expand collaborative decision making. Empower individual colleges. Improve interior communications. Decentralize bureaucracy. Greater use of technology.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Poor political decision making. Excessive interference by BOG. Competition from neighboring CCs. Competition from distance education. Reform efforts could fail. Poor public perception of district. Continued financial distress. Immovable vested interests.</p>

FACILITIES

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>We have land and acreage to develop. Good locations for serving public. Skilled labor force. Historical presence in community.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Aging structures, high maintenance. No air conditioning, poor heating. Lack of quality, affordable food service. Dirty campuses, restrooms. Inadequate, demoralized maintenance staff.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Bond initiative. Welfare-to-work programs. Private funding. Leasing contracts, partnerships. Bond to build and repair parking lots, to be repaid via fees.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Threats</u></p> <p>The relatively new, modern campuses of competitors surround us. Regulatory constraints like the Field Act impact old campus structures. Mandatory, low-cost bidder laws often result in hiring firms that do shoddy work.</p>

LEGISLATION

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Lobby the 30 legislators who serve our district. Many staff have experience & connections with state & federal elected officials. Strong connections with labor and other allies. Large number of students who attended CCs who vote and lobby.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>No clear district identity. Weak legislative agenda. Indifference to politics. Perception that we are not responsive to Immigrants & Latinos. Top leaders not active statewide. We are so politicized we function poorly and become target of criticism.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Create short-term agenda. Develop relationship with legislators and staff. Bring politicians on campus. Develop strategies that involve students.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Term limits require constant grooming of new legislators. Poor legislation might cripple district. Suburban districts siphoning funds from urban districts. A move to dissolve district or close campuses.</p>

THE ACTION PLAN

Personal assessments, group brainstorming sessions and a SWOT analysis were all a prelude to the heart of the strategic planning process—the development of a plan of action capable of initiating an LACCD renaissance. After a final, wide-ranging brainstorming session on potential actions, members formed into six subgroups: Internal, Facilities, Revenue Enhancement, Legislative (subsequently collapsed into Revenue/Legislative), Marketing,

and Operations. For each they developed an action plan that specified at least two urgent *proposals* requiring immediate action, a concise statement of the *issue*, and a *process* for timely implementation.

I. INTERNAL

Issue: The centralized LACCD administration is largely a vestige of ties to K-12 and to the pre Prop13 era of local taxation, no fees and access restricted to those who reside within district boundaries. With the shift of funding and authority to the state, and the advent of free flow which allows students to choose the CC of their choice, the centralized governance structure is counterproductive: it is costly, inefficient, redundant, diffuses accountability, discourages entrepreneurship, and makes individual colleges beholden to the central office rather than students and programs. Change is long overdue and essential if the district is to survive the new wave of challenges. Change may include shifting the location of central offices to a campus and creating a mix of colleges and centers.

Proposals:

- #1) *Each college shall develop an educational, student-oriented strategic plan consistent with its own mission statement.*
- #2) *Decentralize and reorganize administration: Work collaboratively with all segments to decentralize LACCD so colleges will be empowered, accountable, and receptive to new forms of intercollegiate relationships, all in order to operate more efficiently and serve students more effectively. Included in the decentralization process is a redefinition of the roles of the Board, Chancellor, unions, senates and other governance entities.*
- #3) *Revise internal governance and operational procedures to enhance student success; review faculty and labor contracts to determine if provisions unnecessarily impact student needs and as appropriate negotiate mutually agreeable changes.*

Process: Begin immediately a ground up evaluation of our governance structure and by spring 1999 present to the Board detailed recommendations for change.

II. FACILITIES

Issue: The campuses are decades old and generally in a deplorable state. Buildings are in serious disrepair and lack proper heating and air conditioning, landscaping is neglected, latrines and grounds are dirty, and food service is inadequate. The overall unpleasant environment drives students to suburban competitors like Pasadena and Santa Monica.

Proposals:

- #4) *For the short term, conduct a low-cost, focused and determined beautification campaign involving staff, students and community that includes cleaning up the campuses, painting key structures, enhancing landscaping and signage, and displaying art.*

#5) For the long term, seek our fair share of state bond funds based on the district's nine percent of statewide FTES; change bond fund regulations to allow for refurbishing campuses built prior to 1965; explore a facility bond on the LA County ballot; use existing funds to leverage additional revenue.

Process: The colleges should begin immediately to involve faculty, staff and students in a "crash" campus beautification program that improves the public image and appeal of the campuses, preparatory to pursuing the long-range goal of substantive facility refurbishment.

III. REVENUE ENHANCEMENT /LEGISLATIVE

Issue: California Community Colleges currently receive less than 60 percent of the National Funding per full time equivalent student average and 54 % of the state program based funding model. As a result, the community colleges have been allowed to fall into disrepair and budgets have been balanced by reducing staff and forcing excess students into overcrowded classrooms. The state of California must restore appropriate funding to the colleges so that they can meet the national challenge of educating an under prepared populous to compete in the world of the 21st century.

Complicating financial problems, an alleged violation of existing 75/25 regulations has caused the district a \$2.8 million penalty. Such punitive regulations push colleges deeper into debt and ultimately affect their ability to provide proper services to students.

Lastly, many students in LACCD live in poverty-stricken areas. They routinely experience extreme financial hardships and require special services. The state should provide increased assistance for these students and the special programs that serve them.

#6) Increase funding for California community colleges to reflect both the national average and the state allocation model. Included in the funding would be a mechanism that allows return to original enrollment caps.

#7) Increase partnerships with the private sector through contract education, name buildings after benefactors, alert contractors to special programs such as LACCD's music academy, strengthen local college foundations, and adopt and form productive legislative relationships with local, state and federal elected officials.

#8) Develop new revenue and grant resources; seek new endowment funds: eliminate 50 percent match for maintenance; expand public/private partnerships; examine the feasibility of a 1/4 percent sales tax dedicated to education; increase non-credit programs; work to ensure LACCD representation under the new federal vocational education act; encourage the county to utilize more welfare dollars for education by referring clients to district programs.

#9) Revise the requirement of a 75/25 ratio of full to part-time instructors so that it is driven by incentives rather than penalties.

#10) Develop educational enterprise zones that provide for an increase in funding and financial aid, and special incentives for forming partnerships with business.

#11) Achieve fiscal stability by seeking a fair share of the Prop 98 split, guaranteed backfills for property tax and health fees, lower costs for student equipment and textbooks; and by balancing the budget and providing adequate reserves to cover expenditures for current services.

Process: Direct the district legislative advocate to pursue changes in state board regulations and initiate new legislation that addresses these problems. Specific steps and time lines include, among others:

1. Set up a revenue subcommittee of the District Budget Committee—September.
2. Develop a position paper—October.
3. Chancellor and Board approval of position paper—October.
4. Legislative analyst coordinates the Presidents, faculty leaders and board members in working with local legislation.
5. Chancellor and Board President work with the new state governor.
6. Hold workshops on available grants from state, federal, and the state Chancellor's office, and available resources from public/ private sectors; workshops on how to maximize funds from these entities.

IV. MARKETING

Issue: The district service area covers 800 square miles and is comprised of nine widely dispersed campuses and a downtown administrative facility. While residents may be acquainted with individual community colleges in LACCD, many are not aware of the system as a whole, the connections between campuses, and the variety of services they provide. Further, negative press about the failures of the district's centralized administration often damages the reputation of all the colleges. An image builder (not a "spin doctor") could create a more positive, coherent institutional image based on sound existing services, the new changes wrought by the strategic plan, and the individuality of each college

Proposals:

#12) The colleges should collectively work to create a strong, positive and attractive institutional image by improving the appearance of facilities, catalogues and brochures, by advertising in a way that both appeals to and informs clientele, by collecting the kind of data that allow planners to be proactive in designing the programs the community needs, and by keeping the community informed of successes.

#13) Hire a public relations person who can communicate well both internally and externally and has good contacts with the media in our nine local communities as well as the county, and can create a strong, positive and attractive institutional image. In addition, appoint "point" persons, like the college presidents, to maintain relations with local communities, the city and county.

Process: Hire a professional image builder in 60 days. The individual colleges should determine the mix of products and services to be advertised

and should immediately commit to a philosophy of service to students. The goal is to become the “Nordstrom” of community colleges. The success of the program could be determined by satisfaction surveys and any increase in enrollment.

V. OPERATIONS

Issue: The district needs a consistent way to address facilities and legislative/revenue issues and keep all employees and the public informed of successes and important work in progress. Too often plans languish on shelves; the colleges, let alone the public, are unaware of what each other is doing; and contacts with the media are limited to a few regional, often biased sources. While each college needs to let its local community know what’s happening, LACCD must communicate district-wide commonalities, achievements, and goals, a strategy that would strengthen identity and facilitate partnerships with business and industry.

Proposals:

#14) Develop a plan for advocacy by creating three committees:

- A) Legislative*
- B) Facilities (with a Revenue subcommittee)*
- C) Marketing*

#15) Enhance internal communications by writing up and disseminating a report on this strategic planning session.

#16) Provide the Board, staff and the public with detailed monthly updates of strategic plan progress.

Process: By the end of October have a written report on strategic plan activities and hold a press briefing for local and regional reporters that details our internal and external initiatives and highlights interesting campus activities. After this initial meeting, develop a 3-month plan detailing follow up public relations activities.

LACCD LEGISLATIVE WEEK

It’s one thing to develop action plans, quite another to keep the players outside the district informed of our plans and invite them to become allies in our quest to improve student service. In line with the process outlined in VI Operations above, we should designate a week in November as LACCD Legislative Week and invite the press, state chancellor’s office, state Board of Governors, legislators, county and city officials, and business and community leaders to a series of tours, presentations, and workshops—all intended to spread the wealth and word of LACCD.

POSTSCRIPT: A FINAL WORD FROM PARTICIPANTS

At the conclusion of the strategic planning session, participants were asked to share what they got out of it and what they were willing to do. Their assessment is overwhelmingly positive. They find that in spite of long-standing differences and a history of infighting, they can work constructively together, that a common vision is emerging, and that they are united in their willingness to make it happen. A sampling of comments follows:

What I got out of the conference.	What I'm willing to do.
The opportunity to sit down and discuss problems together regardless of our rank.	Serve on a district-wide committee and get others informed of our district-wide agenda.
Instead of feeling "under siege," I now have a vision. I appreciate the in-depth analysis and the fact we are all swimming together.	Work diligently on the legislative committee, recognize that we must do the work and enjoy the journey.
Enjoyed the process.	Do what I can at all levels.
The sense of collective commitment and will to change.	Try to do my best.
We are well ahead of where we would have been without this planning session.	Share plan with leadership team because it gives direction and empowerment.
A new personal sense that in terms of organization and philosophy we are in transition to a better system, and that we have the willingness and courage to go down the road we selected here today.	Will do whatever necessary to spread the word, get others to go along with us.
Validation of sentiment that if we sit down and talk about problems we can solve them. Need to stand side by side and instead of eyeball to eyeball, all eyes stay focused on the problem.	Will work with everyone—administrators and board—to enhance welfare of students and faculty.
Happy to see us communicating together and working toward a common goal; it's one of the blocks essential to building a pyramid of success.	Share with others on my campus what we learned today, encourage others to join in our efforts. I see a better place for students, staff and district and want to work hard to achieve it.
I learned what the district's priorities are; a lot of us learned we think alike about those priorities.	Think about how to frame the specifics of the suggestions we heard today.
We have identified a mission; we now know where we need to go.	Focus on strengths, go on offense about things we do well, work to serve students instead of impress the press.
Appreciate the progressive, constructive conversation with everybody.	You can count on me to do my best.

I appreciate the sense that we now have a well-focused legislative program and will support the efforts of our advocate to achieve our goals.	SEIU will work hard at local, state and federal levels to support our advocacy program which ultimately will benefit all employees and students.
Appreciate the leadership of those who are helping us devise a strategic plan and hope our open, honest and dignified communication today means an end to bickering and closed-door decisions.	Promote constructive, respectful communications and be influential in enhancing way students make their needs known to the trustees.
Impressed with our shared values, and that we are all pulling together. My uncivil attitude toward administrators is changing; I see us all working together, allies on the same team.	Work on our legislative program and get the message out that we must all join together to achieve our goals or we won't ever get there.
We are beginning to end random movement and are all lining up together to move toward a common vision, one that's just starting to come into focus	I'm optimistic and will be working on various finance committees and developing a position paper that will lead us to better overall financial stability.
What I saw today demonstrated a family spirit, a willingness to work as a team with mutual respect for the players.	In three years, I would like to feel extremely proud of this district—that is my vision.
Impressed with the positive attitude and the sense that instead of just talking to talk, we are willing to "walk the walk."	I would like to serve on the revenue enhancement, community relations, and marketing committees.
There is a strong commitment to the colleges as well as the district; and a belief that decentralization will help us to enjoy the best of both.	Work to increase the voice of the students. My hope is to help all of us to get the message out.

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